South African citrus industry optimistic following Washington talks

By Fred Meintjes | 27 May 2025

Details of trade talks in Washington DC between the US and South Africa and reaction thereto are slowly beginning to emerge

The South African Citrus Growers Association (CGA) said last week's meeting between South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and US President Donald Trump, and the discussions that followed, represented a moment of potential renewal and opportunity in global trade.

CGA CEO Boitshoko Ntshabele

"The CGA remains hopeful that the teams on both sides can find each other," said CGA CEO Boitshoko Ntshabele. "A trade deal that benefits both SA agriculture and the US is completely feasible."

[illegible] negotiations with the US administration can put South Africa on a firmer footing concerning the establishment of a free trade agreement.

“The tariff turmoil, while unsettling, should not be viewed solely as a threat. Instead, it presents a potent, perhaps overdue, catalyst for governments worldwide to re-evaluate their trade strategies. This should specifically be with a renewed focus on quicker turnaround times in establishing trade deals, and a renewed focus on the value of diversified markets,” he said.

In the wake of the Washington talks public opinion in South Africa has mostly swung behind the South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who defended his country against the accusations of the US President about genocide of white farmers. These accusations have been largely rejected both locally and internationally.

Despite the positive outlook from industry, no details have emerged about discussions at the meeting and it is not clear yet if there has been any movement on 90-day pause on the US tariffs recently imposed on South Africa, or what will happen after the pause expires in July.

President Ramaposa this weekend described his meeting at the White House as productive, particularly during a working lunch that included discussions on trade, investment, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

“There is ongoing engagement between US and South African officials, particularly on trade and industry matters,” he noted.

The meeting comes as the first conventional reefer shipment of the citrus season left South Africa the week commencing 19 May and is scheduled to arrive in Philadelphia by the end of the first week of June. It is expected that the South African citrus growers will maximise the period till the end of June to get as much fruit as possible on the water before the 90-day pause in tariffs expires.